
Farington Cricket Ground
Woodcock Estate, Farington
Planning Statement

Prepared on behalf of Lancashire County Council

July 2022

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the following development at Woodcock Estate, Stanifield Lane, Farington (the "Application Site" or "Site"):

Proposed Cricket Facility comprising 2No. cricket ovals and associated pavilion building and spectator seating, covered cricket nets, access, parking, landscaping and associated works (including temporary event overlay facilities on ticketed match days), realignment of Public Right of Way Ref 9-12-FP 1, 7-4-FP 6 and Public Right of Way Ref 9-12-FP 2, 7-4-FP 5.

- 1.2 The application is made by Lancashire County Council ("LCC") ("the Applicant") to Lancashire County Council ("the determining authority"), in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992¹. The Proposed Development has been developed in collaboration with Lancashire Cricket (LC) who would be the end-user for the facility.
- 1.3 The Site extends to 13.7ha and comprises agricultural land. The extent of the Application Site is defined in red on the submitted Site Location Plan (enclosed as **Appendix 1**).

Scheme Objectives and Benefits

- 1.4 LC have a long-standing requirement for a second ground to function alongside their main ground at Emirates Old Trafford (EOT). This is considered critical to the future of the Club in terms of alleviating existing issues experienced at EOT (largely capacity related); in terms of supporting player development; and expanding the appeal of the game across Lancashire and the wider North-West.
- 1.5 In seeking to address this LC has signed a Development Agreement with LCC to develop a new purpose-built facility which will meet their requirements in the most sustainable manner possible.

¹ Pursuant to s.316 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 1.6 This Statement will demonstrate how the Proposed Development accords with planning policy at a national and local level and highlight the substantial benefits which the scheme will deliver.

Planning Application Pack

- 1.7 The submission is accompanied by the following documents:
- Covering Letter, prepared by Barton Willmore, now Stantec;
 - Application Form and Certificates, duly completed by Barton Willmore, now Stantec;
 - Application Drawings, prepared by BDP;
 - Landscape Drawings, prepared by Urban Green;
 - Design and Access Statement (July 2022), prepared by BDP;
 - Planning Statement (July 2022), prepared by Barton Willmore, now Stantec;
 - Transport Assessment (including Travel Plan) (July 2022), prepared by WSP;
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (July 2022), prepared by Urban Green;
 - Assessment of Benefits (July 2022), prepared by AMION;
 - Flood Risk Assessment (July 2022), prepared by BDP;
 - Sustainable Drainage Strategy (July 2022), prepared by BDP;
 - North West SuDS Pro-forma, duly completed by BDP;
 - Ecological Assessment (March 2022), prepared by BDP;
 - Biodiversity Net Gain Report (May 2022), prepared by Urban Green;
 - Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (May 2022), prepared by Urban Green;
 - Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan (July 2022), prepared by Urban Green;
 - Environmental Noise Assessment (July 2022), prepared by Red Acoustics;
 - Air Quality Assessment (July 2022), prepared by Cundall;
 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment (July 2022), prepared by Urban Green;
 - Archaeological Desk-based Assessment (March 2022), prepared by Salford Archaeology;
 - BREEAM and Net Zero Carbon Report (March 2022), prepared by BDP;
 - Energy Strategy (July 2022), prepared by Hurstwood;
 - Agricultural Land Assessment (October 2021), prepared by Reading Agricultural Consultants;
 - Phase 1 Geoenvironmental Site Assessment (March 2022), prepared by e3p; and
 - Statement of Community Involvement (July 2022), prepared by Royal Pilgrim.

- 1.8 Read together the above documents provide a comprehensive assessment and robust justification of the Proposed Development.
- 1.9 A separate formal request for an EIA Screening Opinion has been submitted to the Council. This concludes that the proposals are not considered to constitute EIA development.

Statement Contents

- 1.10 The structure of this Statement is as follows:
- **Section 2** describes the Site and the main features in the surrounding area and provides a summary of the relevant planning history for the Site.
 - **Section 3** outlines the relevant planning policy context of the Site.
 - **Section 4** describes the Proposed Development.
 - **Section 5** sets out the Very Special Circumstances which justify the development proposed in the Green Belt and Area of Separation.
 - **Section 6** sets out a planning assessment of the Proposed Development.
 - **Section 7** provides an overall summary and our conclusions on the appropriateness of the Proposed Development and its acceptability in planning terms.

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

The Site

- 2.1 The boundary of the Site is identified in red on the Site Location Plan, included in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 The Site lies to the north of Leyland and to the south west of Bamber Bridge. Its boundary extends broadly to the A582 Farington Road to the north beyond which is the predominantly residential area of Lostock Hall; Stanifield Lane to the east beyond which sits the Lancashire Central (Cuerden Strategic) site; and Fowler Lane to the south and west beyond which is Leyland Business Park.
- 2.3 The Site is currently made up of a number of agricultural fields interspersed with individual residential/farm buildings. None of the existing buildings within the Site are statutorily listed and the Site does not fall within a designated Conservation Area. The majority of the Site sits within Flood Zone 1 (least at risk from flooding) albeit a small part of the Site falls within Flood Zone 2 adjacent to the A582 Farington Road boundary.
- 2.4 The Site is located in the Green Belt and an Area of Separation (AS1: Lostock Hall and Bamber Bridge). A number of trees and tree groups within the Site are the subject of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).
- 2.5 There are two Public Rights of Way (PROW) which traverse the Site. Footpath 7, 4, 5 runs from the south western corner of the Site, and Footpath 9, 12, 2 runs west from the eastern Site boundary. These Footpaths converge at the farm buildings located to the eastern boundary. Footpath 7, 4, 6 and Footpath 9, 12, 1 run along the northern Site boundary, connecting Farington Road to the west and Stanifield Lane to the east.

Surrounding Area

- 2.6 The Site's immediate surroundings is largely green open space / agricultural fields scattered with residential properties including those located off Stanifield Land to the east (Sherdley Cottage and those along Woodcock Estate); Fowler Lane to the south; and Fowler Avenue to the west. The wider site context is characterised by larger scale development to the north and south. To the east lies the Lancashire

Central (Cuerden Strategic) site which is allocated for strategic employment uses and supporting uses.

Planning History

- 2.7 The Site has not been subject to any large-scale planning applications, with the only recorded planning history relating to minor proposals linked to the existing buildings on the site.
- 2.8 To the east of the Site lies the Lancashire Central (Cuerden Strategic) site which is subject an extant planning permission granted by South Ribble Borough Council (Ref: 07/2017/0211/ORM) for a large-scale mixed-use development including employment, retail, leisure and residential uses. It is however, understood that proposals for the site are being revisited and a new planning application is to be submitted for a more 'employment focussed' mix of uses.

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Background

- 3.1 In recent years, Lancashire Cricket (LC) have identified a critical need for a second permanent ground to complement the facilities at Emirates Old Trafford (EOT), which no longer has the capacity to satisfactorily accommodate the growing demands for playing and training across all levels of the game.

"The ground and net pitches at EOT provide a finite resource which has been taken beyond its limits over the past few years as the amount of cricket being played has increased dramatically. Gone are the days when purely men's First and Second team cricket plus one Test match were the sum total. We now are duty bound to provide playing and practice facilities for all our Senior men's and women's teams, our Academies, England Test and One day matches, International teams who may need quarantine and practice prior to tours and for the four week long 100 tournament. EOT cannot do this alone" (Paul Allott, Lancashire Cricket) (**Appendix 3**)

- 3.2 Whilst historically LC have utilised out ground cricket facilities at Clubs around the north-west in order to take pressure away from EOT (including Liverpool CC, Blackpool CC, Southport CC and more recently, Sedbergh School in Cumbria), many of these Clubs are struggling financially and find it very difficult to provide the facilities and playing conditions necessary for First Class cricket. These clubs cannot therefore continue to assist LC without significant help from the County.

"Lancashire's elite teams are in desperate need of a high-quality First Class training and playing facility away from EOT. To emphasise this, with a Blast quarter final coming up this week and four hugely important CC matches up coming the nets and square at EOT are almost totally worn out and unusable for quality practice. This is no-ones fault and is attributable to constant and over use of the Ground. In addition, we are unable to play our final CC match at EOT because of concert commitments, which mean that we are dependent on Liverpool to stage the match with all the attendant difficulties that ensues" (Paul Allott, Lancashire Cricket)

- 3.3 In order to address the urgent needs of the Club, LC have been working closely with LCC as development partner, to draw up ambitious plans for a second ground within Lancashire to alleviate capacity issues at EOT and support LC's on-going growth across all areas of the Game (including academy and women's cricket in particular).

Farington will provide what Lancashire Cricket has been in need of for many years; a secondary high-quality hub away from EOT" (Paul Allott, Lancashire Cricket)

The Proposals

- 3.4 As illustrated on the Proposed Site Plan included in **Appendix 2**, the Proposed Development comprises two full-size cricket ovals and associated pavilion building and spectator seating, partially covered cricket nets, access, parking, landscaping and associated works (including temporary event overlay facilities on ticketed match days).
- 3.5 The cricket ovals will be surrounded by natural sloping terraces which will provide informal seating for spectators. It is anticipated that the sloping terraces could accommodate a maximum crowd of 5,000 spectators. An area of permanent seating is proposed in proximity to the pavilion building which sits centrally between the two pitches.
- 3.6 A practice area incorporating partially covered nets is proposed to the rear of the pavilion. This location has been informed by a number of factors and detailed consideration of alternatives including the area to the east of the Pavilion (discounted due to area constraints, impact on the PROW and Sherdley Cottage which lies in very close proximity to this part of the Site); and east of the overflow car park, adjacent to Stanifield Lane (discounted due to fundamental concerns expressed by the ECB in relation to child safeguarding and ease of accessibility). The latter emphasised in particular the importance of placing the nets in close proximity to the pavilion building. Recognising the relative proximity of residential dwellings sited along Fowler Avenue, a 5m acoustic fence is proposed around the practice net facility.
- 3.7 A new access point is proposed to take the form of a priority-controlled junction off Stanifield Lane, with the site access as the minor arm. A ghost right turn island is

to be provided and the site access arm will consist of two lanes, one for right turning vehicles and one for left turning vehicles.

- 3.8 In order to make way for the proposed access, a diversion of the existing PROW (Ref: 9-12-FP 1, 7-4-FP 6) is proposed. It is also proposed to divert the existing PROW which runs across the centre of the Site (Ref: 9-12-FP 2, 7-4-FP 5) in order to facilitate the provision of the proposed pitches. The existing alignment of both PROWs and the proposed diverted routes is shown on the Public Rights of Way Plan (Drawing Ref: UG_1016_LAN_PROW_DRW_11 Rev P20), with further details also set out within the submitted Design and Access Statement. The rationale and justification behind the proposed diversions is set out in more detail in Section 6.
- 3.9 A separate Public Path Order has been submitted to LCC for consideration in parallel with this application.
- 3.10 Parking is proposed for 265 cars on a permanent basis within two separate parking areas. A car park comprising 50 spaces (including five accessible spaces) is proposed to the west of the pavilion building which is intended to serve the day-to-day needs of the facility. A further 215-space car park is proposed within the north-eastern part of the Site to the south of the proposed new access which will be available on a permanent basis. On event days, where required, an overflow car park with an additional 235 spaces will be provided on the Site, to the east of main (215-space) car park. An appropriate level of cycle parking will also be provided within the development.
- 3.11 The internal road layout will include a 7m wide access road serving the main car park, as well as a 3.5m access route to the parking area adjacent to the pavilion building. As set out within the Transport Assessment, the access route to the pavilion will have multiple passing places. The internal layout includes a safe and suitable turning point for coaches, as well as provision for servicing and delivery vehicles. A drop off / pick up area is also proposed adjacent to the main car park. This will be a circular drop off, suitable for coach and bus movements, as well as taxi and private vehicle drop offs.
- 3.12 As set out in more detail within the Design and Access Statement prepared by BDP, the proposed pavilion building will include changing rooms, a gym, groundskeeping office and store, a reception area, players dining and hospitality space (capable of accommodating up to 160 covers).

- 3.13 Sympathetic natural landscaping, including new trees and wildflower planting and green spaces will be provided to create an attractive setting, encourage wildlife and providing natural screening for local residents.
- 3.14 The proposals will provide a high-quality professional and community cricket facility, supporting the development of community, recreational, youth and elite sport. The ground will be used as LC's second ground, hosting top tier professional cricket matches and elite training. The facility is proposed to become a Centre of Excellence for Women's Cricket in the North West, hosting Women's matches and training sessions. Additionally, the ground will be used by youth, disability and community teams.
- 3.15 The Lancashire Cricket Foundation (LCF), the official charity of LC, runs a range of projects, programmes and events designed to engage and inspire individual and communities through cricket. The proposed new facility at Farington will provide an additional location for such events and programmes to be held and will look to actively engage the local community.

Proposed Use

- 3.16 The use of the facility will vary throughout the year, focused primarily on the cricket season which runs from April to September. The use of the two ovals will be during the cricket season only. The training nets and gym will be available for use year-round, but the overall level of activity at the Site will be significantly reduced outside of the cricket season.
- 3.17 Groundskeeping staff will maintain the Site year-round, with additional staff employed on a seasonal basis during the cricket season and on 'ticketed admission' event days.

Day-to-Day Usage

- 3.18 There will be day-to-day variation in the use of the Site throughout the cricket season, with both pitches in use simultaneously on some days, and other days where there will be limited or no use of the pitches. While LC would look to make full use of the facility, from a groundskeeping perspective, it is not feasible to make use of both pitches intensively on a daily basis. The ground and nets are a finite

resource which, if overused, become worn out and unusable for quality cricket practice and first-class matches.

Ticketed Admission Matches

3.19 The Site will host up to 20 days of ticketed-admission events per year and is proposed to have a maximum crowd capacity of 5,000 spectators. However, it is anticipated that a maximum capacity crowd of 5,000 would be a rare occurrence, an aspirational level associated with Men's First XI T20 matches only.

3.20 On a ticketed event day, temporary event overlay facilities will be provided on Site. This will include space for food and beverage kiosks, LC merchandise shop and additional welfare facilities. Space for team coach parking is provided to the west of the pavilion. Space for set up of broadcasting and media equipment is to be located within the overflow car park.

3.21 It is proposed that the use of the facility would be regulated by the following Use Parameters:

- The use of the cricket ovals will be during April to September.
- The use of the cricket nets and pavilion building will be year-round.
- The Site will host up to 20 days of 'ticketed admission' events per year, to include as follows:
 - Up to two four-day fixtures for Lancashire Men's first team (expected to draw crowds of up to 2,000 spectators per day)
 - Up to six white ball matches for Lancashire Men's first team (expected to draw crowds of up to 5,000 spectators per day)
 - Up to six white ball matches for Lancashire Women's first team (expected to draw crowds of up to 500 spectators per day)
- T20 games on a weekday will start no later than 16:15 in order to avoid overlap with the PM peak

Use of the Pavilion

3.22 The proposed pavilion building provides a multitude of functions necessary to support the use of the facility for elite cricket purposes. This includes the provision

of changing facilities; toilets; a players gym; hospitality area; and ground maintenance facilities including internal storage. Further detail on the internal arrangements of the pavilion are included in the Design and Access Statement. The pavilion building would be available for use all year round.

Engagement

- 3.23 The Proposed Development has been the subject of extensive pre-application discussions with senior officers at LCC, key stakeholders and the local community. Statutory consultees such as Lancashire County Council (Highways) and National Highways have also been extensively engaged.
- 3.24 In order to ensure that the community and relevant stakeholders had sufficient opportunity to find out about the proposals, a consultation website was launched on 01 December 2021. This contained key information on the proposals, including detailed images, and encouraged visitors to submit feedback.
- 3.25 Overall, 84% of the feedback received was supportive of the proposals. Further details of the consultation responses is set out within the Statement of Community Involvement (July 2022), submitted with the application.
- 3.26 There has also been close engagement with neighbouring residents who are most likely to be directly affected by the Proposed Development. This included virtual meetings with the development team on 6th January 2022, 29th March 2022 and 27th July 2022. A number of key issues were raised relating to neighbour amenity, including how events will be managed, access, traffic and parking, as well as boundary treatments and security for neighbouring properties. More detailed feedback and how the applicant has responded is set out within the Statement of Community Involvement.
- 3.27 There has also been extensive engagement with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, planning applications are to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the Site comprises:

- Central Lancashire Core Strategy (July 2012); and
- South Ribble Local Plan (2012 – 2026) (July 2015).

4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) is also a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021)

4.3 The NPPF was most recently updated in July 2021 and sets out the Governments objectives for achieving sustainable development. The NPPF outlines a series of considerations against which development would need to be assessed.

Achieving sustainable development

4.4 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

Building a strong, competitive economy

- 4.5 Paragraph 81 encourages decisions to help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt and *'significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential'*.

Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy

- 4.6 Paragraph 84 requires policies and decision to enable leisure developments which respect the character of the Countryside and the development of community facilities including sports venues.
- 4.7 Paragraph 85 additionally acknowledges that sites may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable. The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

Promoting healthy and safe communities

- 4.8 Paragraph 92 encourages the creation of healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction; are safe and accessible; and enable and support healthy lifestyles including through the provision of sports facilities.
- 4.9 Paragraph 98 notes that *'access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change'*.
- 4.10 Paragraph 100 encourages the protection and enhancement of public rights of way and access, including through the provision of better facilities for users.

Promoting sustainable transport

- 4.11 Paragraph 104 encourages transport issues to be considered from the earliest stages of development proposals so that the potential impacts on transport networks can be addressed; opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure are realised; opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport are identified and pursued; the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified assessed and taken into account; and patterns of movement, parking and other considerations are integral to the design of schemes, contributing to making high quality places.
- 4.12 Paragraph 105 encourages significant development to be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. However, it is also recognised that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.
- 4.13 Paragraph 111 states that '*development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe*'.

Achieving well-designed places

- 4.14 The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. The creation of high-quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, and good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.
- 4.15 Paragraph 130 encourages decisions to ensure that developments will *inter alia*: function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; are sympathetic to local character and history including landscape setting; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible which promote health and well-being.

Protecting Green Belt Land

- 4.16 The Government attaches great importance Green Belts, the fundamental aim of which is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open (Paragraph 137).
- 4.17 As defined by Paragraph 138, the Green Belt has five purposes: a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 4.18 Paragraph 147 confirms that 'inappropriate development' is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should only be approved in very special circumstances. Paragraph 148 goes on to states that *'when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations'*.
- 4.19 The construction of new buildings within the Green Belt is generally regarded as 'inappropriate' unless it falls within one of the exception criteria listed under Paragraph 149 which includes: *'b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it'*.
- 4.20 Paragraph 150 identifies other forms of development which are also not considered to be inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These include b) engineering operations and e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation).

Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

- 4.21 Paragraph 152 calls for the planning system to support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 4.22 Paragraph 169 requires all major developments to incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate.

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

- 4.23 Paragraph 174 encourages decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural environment by *inter alia*: recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

Planning Practice Guidance

- 4.24 The Planning Practice Guidance ("PPG") was originally published in March 2014 and is periodically updated. The PPG provides additional guidance to support the NPPF.

The Development Plan*Central Lancashire Core Strategy (July 2012)*

- 4.25 The Central Lancashire Core Strategy (CLCS) (2012) was produced jointly by Preston, South Ribble and Chorley, with assistance from Lancashire County Council. The CLCS sets out the spatial planning proposals for the combined area over the period to 2026.
- 4.26 **Policy 1** (Locating Growth) seeks to focus growth and investment in Preston and the South Ribble Urban Area with some greenfield development required on the fringes of the main urban areas, including strategic site allocations (such as Lancashire Central). The location of the Application Site means that it is well-placed to serve areas of growth and investment.

- 4.27 **Policy 2** (Infrastructure) requires development proposals to meet (through developer contributions) the on and off-site infrastructure requirements necessary to support the development and mitigate any impacts.
- 4.28 **Policy 3** (Travel) seeks to reduce the need to travel and to promote more sustainable modes of transport, including through the use of Travel Plans.
- 4.29 **Policy 17** (Design of New Buildings) requires proposals to *inter alia* take account of the character and appearance of the local area; to ensure that the amenities of neighbouring uses will not be adversely affected; make provision for the needs of special groups; and promote sustainable design and construction that will be adaptable to climate change.
- 4.30 **Policy 18** (Green Infrastructure) seeks to manage and improve the natural environment and secure mitigation and/or compensatory measures where development would lead to the loss of, or damage to, part of the Green Infrastructure Network.
- 4.31 **Policy 19** (Areas of Separation and Major Open Space) designates Areas of Separation (including (d) Bamber Bridge and Lostock Hall), to help maintain openness in areas where there are relatively small amounts of open countryside between settlements. This policy applies is intended to apply to all forms of development including that considered appropriate in the Green Belt (paragraph 10.14).
- 4.32 **Policy 21** (Landscape Character Areas) requires new development to be well integrated into existing settlement patterns; appropriate to the landscape character type and designation within which it is situated; and to contribute positively to its conservation, enhancement or restoration or the creation of appropriate new features.
- 4.33 **Policy 22** (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) seeks to ensure that areas/sites with international, national and local designations will not be adversely affected by new development; and promote opportunities to enhance and manage the biological and geological assets of the area.

- 4.34 **Policy 24** (Sport and Recreation) seeks to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access good sport, physical activity and recreation facilities including through the identification of sites for major new facilities where providers have evidence of need. It is recognised at Paragraph 11.2 that the provision of green open spaces which promote increased physical activity and exercise can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.
- 4.35 **Policy 25** (Community Facilities) seeks to ensure that local communities have sufficient provision of community facilities which act as a focus of community activity and contribute towards community cohesion.
- 4.36 **Policy 27** (Sustainable Resources and New Developments) requires all non-residential buildings to meet BREEAM 'Very Good' standard. Additionally, for all non-residential buildings exceeding 500 sqm evidence should also be provided to demonstrate that the design, orientation and layout of the building minimises energy use, maximises energy efficiency and is flexible enough to withstand climate change; and appropriate renewable or low-carb energy sources are incorporated to reduced carbon dioxide emissions but at least 15%. Appropriate storage space should also be provided for recyclable waste materials and composting.
- 4.37 **Policy 29** (Water Management) seeks to improve water quality, water management and reduce the risk of flooding through *inter alia* appraising, managing and reducing the flood risk in all developments; and encouraging the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).
- 4.38 **Policy 30** (Air Quality Policy) seeks to improve air quality through delivery of Green Infrastructure initiatives and through taking account of air quality when prioritising measures to reduce road traffic congestion.
- 4.39 **Policy 31** (Agricultural Land) seeks to protect best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land, (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) when considering both agricultural and other forms of development to avoid irreversible damage to, and instead achieve the full potential, of the soil.

South Ribble Local Plan (2012 – 2026) (July 2015)

- 4.40 The South Ribble Local Plan (SRLP) was adopted in July 2015 and sets out the planning framework for the Borough. It sits alongside, and sets out the Council's interpretation of, the CLCS and includes additional development management policies against which individual planning applications are to be determined.
- 4.41 **Policy C4** (Cuerden Strategic Site) allocates land to the east of the Application Site for comprehensive development to provide a strategic employment site, to include employment, industrial and green infrastructure uses. This is relevant to the Proposed Development in so far as there is a need for the Proposed Development to have regard to proposals on the adjacent site which is also proposed to be accessed (partially) off Stanifield Lane.
- 4.42 **Policy F1** (Parking Standards) requires all proposals to provide car parking and servicing space in accordance with the Council's adopted parking standards. It is noted that some flexibility will be factored into the standards where appropriate and in relation to the specific local circumstances.
- 4.43 **Policy G1** (Green Belt) reiterates the NPPF's Green Belt policy and seeks to resist development in the Green Belt, unless there are Very Special Circumstances and with noted exceptions which includes *'b) provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it'*.
- 4.44 **Policy G5** (Areas of Separation) identifies Areas of Separation aimed at preventing built-up areas from merging into each other, and protecting the land within from inappropriate development. There are three designated areas of separation, including 'AS1 – Bamber Bridge and Lostock Hall'. The policy states that *'the Council will protect this land from inappropriate development in line with Policy G1 and the NPPF'* (i.e. Green Belt policy).
- 4.45 Further provision to extend the Borough's network of Green Infrastructure (which includes sports pitches) is encouraged under **Policy G8** (Green Infrastructure and Networks – Future Provision). Such developments are required to provide appropriate landscape enhancements; conserve important environmental assets and allow for long-term use and management of the area.

- 4.46 **Policy G13** (Trees, Woodlands and Development) states that permission will not be granted where proposals adversely affect trees, woodland and hedgerows which are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). There is also a presumption in favour of the retention and enhancement of existing trees, woodland and hedgerows. In cases where there is an unavoidable loss of trees on a site, replacement trees will be required at a range of two new trees for every one tree lost.
- 4.47 **Policy G16** (Biodiversity and Nature Conservation) requires proposals to protect, conserve and enhance the Borough's biodiversity and ecological network. Where possible, development should avoid significant harm to and provide a net gain in biodiversity. Where the benefits of the development are considered to outweigh the impact on the natural environment, appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures and/or compensation will be required.
- 4.48 **Policy G17** (Design Criteria for New Development) requires proposals to incorporate high-quality design which *inter alia* protects local character and distinctiveness; neighbouring amenity; highway and pedestrian safety; and local landscape features.

Emerging Development Plan

- 4.49 The Central Lancashire Authorities (CLA) are currently in the process of preparing the Central Lancashire Local Plan (CLLP) which once adopted will replace the CLCS and SRLP. The CLLP is currently at an early stage, with the Issues & Options draft having been published for consultation in November 2019. The next stage of consultation on the Preferred Options, has been delayed and is currently anticipated in mid-2022.
- 4.50 To support the production of the new Local Plan the CLA's commissioned a number of new evidence-based documents to inform emerging policy including a Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment (September 2018) and a Playing Pitch Study and Action Plan (December 2018). Both documents identify a significant shortfall in cricket pitch provision within South Ribble and the wider area.

Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment (September 2018)

- 4.51 The Playing Pitch Strategy (2018) presents a supply and demand assessment of playing pitch and other outdoor sports facilities in Central Lancashire which is intended to inform emerging Local Plan policy and decisions affecting the provision of outdoor sports facilities and playing pitches.
- 4.52 Cricket is considered in Part 4 of the report. This identifies that there are a total of 149 competitive cricket teams across Central Lancashire, including 53 within South Ribble of which 25 are Senior Men's', 25 are Junior Boys' and 3 are Senior Women's. There are currently no Junior Girls' teams within Central Lancashire and South Ribble are the only Borough with representation from Senior Women's teams (Tables 4.9 and 4.10). It is also acknowledged that *'Women's and girls' cricket is a national priority and there is a target to establish two girls' and one women's team in every local authority over the next five years'* (top of p.89)
- 4.53 The supply and demand analysis (presented on p.91-92) indicates no spare capacity and a level of overplay in South Ribble amounting to 64 match equivalent sessions (compared to 82 match equivalent sessions across Central Lancashire as a whole). Of this, almost half (33 match equivalent sessions) are within the Leyland Analysis Area. The Central Analysis Area is the only part of the Borough which is operating to capacity.

Playing Pitch Study and Action Plan (December 2018)

- 4.54 The Playing Pitch Study and Action Plan builds on the baseline position established by the Playing Pitch Assessment (PPA) (September 2018) to provide a strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities across Central Lancashire.
- 4.55 This sets out a series of Aims and Recommendations amongst which is the need to provide new outdoor sports facilities where there is current or future demand to do so. This is to be achieved by rectifying quantitative shortfalls in current pitch stock and identifying opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.

- 4.56 In relation to Cricket it is recognised that there are isolated pockets of demand for access to additional facilities where pitches are operating at capacity (including in South Ribble), and which may be additionally impacted by the on-going roll out of the ECB's Allstars Cricket Programme. Additionally, increasing participation in Women's and Girls' cricket is a national priority which should be supported at the local level (e.g. through ensuring access to segregated changing and toilet provision; and access to good quality cricket pitches to support growth).
- 4.57 A site-by-site action plan list also seeks to address key issues identified in the PPA and provides recommendations based on current levels of usage, quality and future demand. Part 9 (p.107-131) deals with sites within South Ribble and includes medium priority recommendation to protect/enhance the following facilities:
- Gregson Lane;
 - Queen Victoria Ground (Walton-Le-Dale);
 - Fox Lane Sports Club;
 - Wellfield Business and Enterprise College & High School; and
 - New Longton Sports & Social Club.
- 4.58 In respect of Fox Lane and New Longton, it is recommended to alleviate overplay through the transferral of demand to a site within sufficient spare capacity. On the basis that there is currently no spare capacity within South Ribble the only options would be to export outside the Borough or create additional capacity within the Borough through new provision.

Policy Conclusions

- 4.59 Arising from the above review, it is clear that there is a need to consider the fundamental policies relating to Green Belt and Areas of Separation which will establish the extent to which the Proposed Development is considered to be appropriate development. These policies are considered in detail in Section 5. Beyond this, there are a number of development management considerations which are considered in more detail in Section 6.

4.60 Whilst the emerging Local Plan remains at an early stage of development, the evidence base points towards a clear need for additional cricket pitch provision within the Borough to assist in alleviating capacity and associated 'overplay' issues at existing Sites and this is therefore an important material consideration in the determination of this application.

5.0 COMPLIANCE WITH GREEN BELT POLICY

5.1 The Application Site is located in the Green Belt (SRLP Policy G1) and an Area of Separation (AS1: Bamber Bridge and Lostock Hall) (CLCS Policy 19 and SRLP Policy G5). Areas of Separation have been identified to protect the local distinctiveness and green infrastructure of certain settlements and neighbourhoods to prevent merging, inappropriate development and protect environmental/open space.

Policy Context

5.2 As set out within Section 4, the local policy position in relation to the Green Belt within the CLCS and SRLP is clear, and consistent with the NPPF. However, there is an important difference in approach to Areas of Separation between the CLCS and SRLP. The supporting text to CLCS Policy 19 indicates that the policy applies to all forms of development including that considered appropriate in the Green Belt (our emphasis). However, the more recent policy in the SRLP (Policy G5) does not repeat this restriction, instead linking its level of protection to Policy G1 which relates to its designation as Green Belt and the NPPF (i.e. it effectively duplicates the Green Belt allocation).

5.3 In accordance with s.38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004² the inconsistency should be resolved in favour of the SBLP. It follows that, in policy terms, the fact that the Application Site is in an Area of Separation does not add anything to the fact that it is in the Green Belt.

5.4 SRLP Policy G1 (Green Belt) states:

"As set out in the NPPF, planning permission will not be given for the construction of new buildings unless there are very special circumstances".

5.5 SRLP Policy G1 also includes the following as an exception to the above:

² Section 38(5) states that "If to any extent a policy contained in a development plan for an area conflicts with another policy in the development plan the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document to become part of the development plan"

"b) provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it"

5.6 This closely mirrors the NPPF (paragraph 147) which states:

"Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances."

5.7 NPPF paragraph 149 goes on to state:

"A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:..."

... b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it"

5.8 In addition, NPPF paragraph 150 states:

"Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:..."

... b) engineering operations..."

... e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds)"

5.9 As set out in Section 3, the Proposed Development involves the creation of a new cricket facility. This involves several distinct elements which are dealt with in turn below.

Material Change of use

- 5.10 The Site is currently in agricultural use and therefore the Proposed Development would constitute a material change of use of the land. However, as a facility for "outdoor sport" the Proposed Development would fall to be considered under part e) of paragraph 150. Such a change of use may be considered appropriate development, but only on the proviso that it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

The Provision of Appropriate Facilities for Outdoor Sport

- 5.11 The Proposed Development involves the erection of a pavilion building with associated spectator seating. The proposed pavilion building has a fundamental purpose in providing a 'base' for the primary activity on the Site, being the playing and practicing of cricket. The scale and form of the building is further dictated to some degree by the needs of the intended end user, LC being a Club operating at a first-class professional level. Operating at this level brings with it generally greater demands be it from players (home and away teams); official bodies (such as the ECB); spectators (including for hospitality and spectator seating); and ground maintenance; all of which would look to the pavilion building to a lesser or greater degree to assist in fulfilling their function. The proposed building has sought to accommodate the absolute minimum requirements to meet these various demands at a standard (and scale) necessary and appropriate with the intended use of the Site at its peak (i.e. for First Class County Cricket matches). It is therefore considered to be an 'appropriate facility' in the context of paragraph 149 on this basis.
- 5.12 Similarly, the proposed practice nets are also a fundamental facility necessary to support the primary use of the Site for outdoor sport. A total of 12 practice wickets are proposed of which three would be covered to enable use all year round. This scale of facility is again reflective of the nature of the Club and anticipated practice demands across all aspects of the game from the Men's and Women's First Teams down to community use and allows for necessary rest periods to ensure the quality of the facility remains sufficiently high and continues to meet ECB requirements. It is therefore considered to be an 'appropriate facility' in the context of paragraph 149 on this basis.

- 5.13 Having concluded that the proposed pavilion building (and associated spectator seating) and practice nets would constitute appropriate facilities to be provided in connection with the proposed change of use of the land for “outdoor sport”, these elements of the proposal fall to be considered as an exception under part b) of paragraph 149. This exception is however, also subject to the proviso that it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

Engineering Operations

- 5.14 The creation of the proposed pitches, embankments, parking areas and internal roads constitute engineering operations and would therefore fall to be considered as an exception under part b) of paragraph 150. This is subject to the same proviso that such works preserve the opening of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- 5.15 Notwithstanding that each element of the proposal has been found to fall within the exception criteria listed under either paragraph 149 or paragraph 150, there is still a requirement in each case to the gateway tests namely, whether it i) preserves the openness of the Green Belt; and ii) does not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. We consider each test in turn below.

Openness

- 5.16 In the consideration of “openness”, case law establishes two important points. Firstly, that openness does not imply freedom from any form of development³. As set out above, the NPPF itself envisages that development of varying types (including the construction of new buildings) can take place without harming the openness of the Green Belt.
- 5.17 In *Europa Oil & Gas Ltd v Secretary of State* [2013] EWHC 2463, Ouseley J held that, in considering whether the proviso in NPPF paragraph 150 that mineral extraction schemes ‘must preserve the openness of the Green Belt’ and not ‘conflict with Green Belt purposes’ in order to avoid being inappropriate, development should be assessed having regard to the fact that any such scheme would involve at least some significant temporary development. The same approach must therefore

³ Paragraph 22, R (Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) & Ors, R (on the application of) v North Yorkshire County Council [2020] UKSC 3 (5 February 2020)

logically apply to all forms of development listed under Paragraph 150 (and exception b) listed under paragraph 149) which are subject to the same prerequisites.

- 5.18 Secondly, the concept of "openness" is not limited to a consideration of volume, and visual impact can also be relevant as set out in *Turner v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* [2016] EWCA Civ 466:

'The concept of "openness of the Green Belt" is not narrowly limited to the volumetric approach suggested by Mr Rudd. The word "openness" is open-textured and a number of factors are capable of being relevant when it comes to applying it to the particular facts of a specific case. Prominent among these will be factors relevant to how built up the Green Belt is now and how built up it would be if redevelopment occurs (in the context of which, volumetric matters may be a material concern, but are by no means the only one) and factors relevant to the visual impact on the aspect of openness which the Green Belt presents'. (paragraph 18).

- 5.19 The consideration of "openness" as a matter of planning judgement, is further clarified by Lord Carnworth in the *Samuel Smith* decision (paragraph 22):

'The concept of "openness" in para 90 of the NPPF seems to me a good example of such a broad policy concept. It is naturally read as referring back to the underlying aim of Green Belt policy, stated at the beginning of this section: "to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open ...". Openness is the counterpart of urban sprawl and is also linked to the purposes to be served by the Green Belt'.

- 5.20 Paragraph 22 continues:

'As PPG2 made clear, it is not necessarily a statement about the visual qualities of the land, though in some cases this may be an aspect of the planning judgement involved in applying this broad policy concept. Nor does it imply freedom from any form of development. Paragraph 90 shows that some forms of development, including mineral extraction, may in principle be appropriate, and compatible with the

concept of openness. A large quarry may not be visually attractive while it lasts, but the minerals can only be extracted where they are found, and the impact is temporary and subject to restoration. Further, as a barrier to urban sprawl a quarry may be regarded in Green Belt policy terms as no less effective than a stretch of agricultural land’.

- 5.21 The proposal is for outdoor sport and the NPPF recognises the potential for ‘appropriate facilities’ to accompany such uses under paragraph 149. Paragraph 149 deals specifically with ‘buildings’ as opposed to ‘other forms of development’ which are dealt with under paragraph 150. There has to be an appreciation therefore, that a scheme for outdoor sport may include some form of building and still be considered appropriate development in the Green Belt.

Appropriate Facilities

- 5.22 In this case, a single, permanent ‘building’ is proposed (the pavilion), comprising 1,558 sqm GEA across two storeys. Alongside this, the practice nets comprises a lightweight, partially covered structure, enclosed on three sides by a 5m close boarded fence, with only the area of covered roof exceeding the height of the fence.
- 5.23 The pavilion building and practice nets have both been designed to nestle into the landscape, in order to minimise visual impact. The concentration of these elements along the western boundary where there are existing buildings of a scattered nature, also enables them to be read in the same landscape context. In a similar vein, the height of the pavilion is consistent with the adjacent built form, helping the building to effectively blend into the rhythm of scattered properties which already form part of views into and across the Site. Both the pavilion and the nets structure have been intentionally pushed into the site topography with a 1.5m drop below existing levels to achieve this. The use of natural materials is also intended to blend the built form into the landscape. In combination, these measures serve to minimise the impact of the built form on the landscape and thereby continue to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.
- 5.24 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) establishes that whilst there will be a change to the character and amenity of localised views (from surrounding properties and the PROWs), where the development will either form a new element in the view or will bring development forward in the view, overall the Site is largely

well contained in views from the wider landscape due to extensive existing tree belts and residential built form to the north and industrial built form to the south and west. It therefore forms a discrete parcel of land which is influenced by the existing residential edges along Fowler Lane, Fowler Avenue and Stanfield Road.

- 5.25 The LVIA concludes that *'although the land proposed to be developed is currently without built form, the proposed scheme comprises "provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport" as stated within Policy G1 - Green Belt. This, in combination with the assessed visual effects and the generally contained nature of the scheme results in **limited assessed impacts** on openness of the Green Belt'* (our emphasis).

Engineering Operations

- 5.26 The proposed pitches and bunds have been designed to form part of the undulating landscape and, notwithstanding some degree of level change, will remain essentially open.
- 5.27 The small section of the formalised spectator seating located adjacent to the pavilion is proposed to be reinforced with concrete but this will be viewed against the backdrop of the pavilion and will, in any event, be lowered into the landscape so as not to appear obtrusive.
- 5.28 The creation of internal road/paths and parking areas will change the visual appearance of the Site but where possible visual impacts will be minimised through design measures including, for example the use of grasscrete within the parking areas. The proposed internal access road has also been specifically designed to follow as closely as possible, the line of existing hedgerows in order to soften its overall impact as a feature which bisects the land.
- 5.29 Overall, the engineering operations associated with the Proposed Development have been accommodated in such a manner which is considered to preserve "openness".

Material Change of Use of Land

- 5.30 On the basis that the component parts of the proposal which contribute to a material change in use of the land have been found to preserve the openness of the Green Belt, it must follow that the material change of use of land must do so also.

This includes temporary activities associated with the day-to-day operation of the Site including for example, the use of land for parking. The fact that this would not be a consistent use (i.e. cars will come and go and vary in their numbers on any given day) and would have no permanence, limits the extent to which such use can ultimately impact on openness.

- 5.31 Notwithstanding that the Site will also accommodate temporary activities associated with match day events these would be, by their nature, temporary. The fact that such event overlay facilities would also have no permanence limits the extent to which it can ultimately impact upon openness.

Figure 5.1: Aerial View of the Site from the North - Existing



Figure 5.2: Aerial View of the Site from the North - Proposed



Overall Conclusions on Openness

- 5.32 The NPPF envisages that development of varying types (including the construction of new buildings) can take place without harming the openness of the Green Belt and case law establishes that development should be assessed having regard to this fact. The proposed pavilion building occupies 1.18% of the Site which is considered appropriate and proportionate having regard to the fact that the NPPF establishes the acceptability of some degree of built form to provide facilities associated with the use of the site for outdoor sport. A range of design measures have been implemented in order to minimise visual impact and whilst the proposal will inevitably change the visual appearance of the Site, it is still capable of preserving the "openness" of the Site. The proposals are therefore considered to have met the policy test at paragraphs 149 and 150 in this respect.

Green Belt Purposes

- 5.33 As defined by Paragraph 138 of the NPPF, the Green Belt has five purposes: a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

- 5.34 The proposals involve a new cricket ground and whilst there will be some urbanising features the approach to design has sought to minimise these whilst also maximising the natural appearance of the site. In maintaining the openness of the Site, the proposal will maintain a visual and physical gap between settlements. In this respect the proposal will maintain a barrier to urban sprawl which is no less effective than a stretch of agricultural land.

b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

- 5.35 Areas of Separation have been identified to protect built-up areas from merging into each other and in this case the Site forms part of AS1: Bamber Bridge and Lostock Hall. The Site contributes towards maintaining a separation between the urban settlements of Lostock Hall to the north and Farington to the south in its current

form comprising agricultural land albeit there are a scattering of residential dwellings around its perimeter. On the basis that the Proposed Development will maintain the openness of the Site and its visibly green character with scattered buildings, it will in turn continue to maintain a visual sense of a gap between settlements.

c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- 5.36 The Site's location and proximity to nearby urban settlements, in addition to the urbanising effects of nearby road noise, already influence the countryside character of the Site and thereby the extent to which it contributes towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The Proposed Development will not materially add to existing effects affecting the Site's countryside character and will therefore have a neutral impact on this Green Belt purpose. Applying the approach established in case law (as set out above) the NPPF envisages that development (including built development) can take place in the Green Belt without harming its purposes (i.e. built development does not automatically equate to encroachment into the countryside).

d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- 5.37 This purpose is not relevant to the application. There is no conflict with the proposal in this respect.

e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- 5.38 A comprehensive assessment of alternative sites has been undertaken (set out in more detail as part of the Very Special Circumstances case) which demonstrates that there are no suitable, available and deliverable sites within the built envelope. In the absence of an alternative urban site, the proposals do not conflict with this purpose.

- 5.39 Having regard to the above, it is concluded that the gateway tests set out in paragraph 149 and 150 are met. The Proposed Development does not therefore constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

5.40 Notwithstanding this conclusion, it is also the case that Very Special Circumstances exist should LCC reach a different view as to whether the proposals constitute appropriate development. The Very Special Circumstances case is set out in detail below.

Very Special Circumstances

5.41 As a matter of principle, where development is seen as 'inappropriate' a 'very special circumstances' case would need to be demonstrated in order for planning permission to be justified as stated in Paragraph 148 of the NPPF (2021):

"When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green belt. 'Very Special Circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations."

5.42 In this case, the proposals are considered 'appropriate' but notwithstanding this, there are very special circumstances which are set out below.

1. Need

5.43 The clear need for cricket pitch provision within South Ribble and the wider area, as evidenced by the PPA (September 2018) and PPS (December 2018) summarised in Section 4. This is coupled with the acute needs of LC for a second ground to alleviate the demands on Emirates Old Trafford and which cannot be satisfactorily met or guaranteed (factoring in the growing demand of training requirements and Women's cricket) at the existing outgrounds. This is evidenced by the statements of Paul Allott (Director of Cricket) and Matt Merchant (Head Groundsman at EOT) included in **Appendix 3** and **4**.

5.44 These statements clearly demonstrate how the existing facilities at EOT are stretched beyond capacity and can only just meet the needs of the primary cricket use for the ground (i.e. training, practice and playing days) for the following:

- International Cricket;
- Elite Lancashire Mens;

- 100 Ball Competitions;
- Women's elite;
- Lancashire Second XI; and
- Prospective knock out quarter finals and semi-finals.

5.45 Table 5.1 below additionally summarises the current use of EOT by the above groups relative to the actual capacity offered by the facility. This clearly shows that EOT is currently operating beyond capacity which is not sustainable from a quality perspective but furthermore, there is absolutely no scope to increase the amount of use at EOT to accommodate additional match or practice time for the Lancashire Second XI team, Academy, or age groups. The consistent and on-going development of these groups are fundamentally compromised due to lack of capacity at EOT.

Table 5.1: Existing Use at EOT

	No. Days
Cricket Season	150
EOT Maximum Capacity	114
Existing Use (+13 days beyond capacity)	127

5.46 The statement of Matt Merchant concludes that:

"Simple maths tells us that, given the above conditions, EOT is beyond its limits already and that a 2nd facility would not only provide opportunity and relief for Lancashire elite cricket but also provide a welcome venue for Academy and age group cricket that cannot be accommodated at EOT at present"

5.47 The statement of Paul Allott adds that:

"Both boys and girls Academies would be based at Farington, and the value of having two separate grounds on the site cannot be overestimated. The main ground would be used for the higher profile matches, men's and women's games at First, Second and Academy level, and also the older age group games, whilst the second ground would be used for some of the above plus lower age group games and community cricket".

"Farington would provide Lancashire Cricket with the necessary pitch and playing resource to cover, promote and extend all cricket that is played under the Lancashire banner, from boys and girls age group through their Academies to elite level for both sexes. At present we are well behind a number of other prominent counties in the Country in this regard and we should waste no time in becoming pre-eminent in this area as we are in so many other aspects of the County game".

- 5.48 The consequences of not being able to deliver additional capacity through the Proposed Development would see continued pressure exerted on existing facilities with the potential for the quality of those facilities to decline as a result. It would also have the effect of stifling LC's growth and development, particularly at junior and academy levels which will ultimately undermine the future prospects of the elite teams.
- 5.49 The statement of Paul Allott is clear that *"the need for top quality pitch and ground conditions is essential in order to adequately prepare future generations of elite cricketers for the top flight. The sooner our younger players are introduced to First class playing conditions the earlier their progress can be accelerated to professional level. These conditions are becoming much scarcer and less reliable in our Club and League environment"*.
- 5.50 The Proposed Development would therefore provide LC with a crucial step-change in their operation, most notably at junior and academy level in terms of providing a capacity for both training and play which does not currently exist. The ability to establish Farington as a Women's Centre of Excellence also has the potential to significantly grow this aspect of the Club's role and offer, through a rise in profile and the quality of the facility as well as the potential to support more girls' teams and to grow talent within the Club.
- 5.51 It is also acknowledged within the statement from the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) who are the governing body for Cricket in England and Wales, (**Appendix 5**) that:

"the project is a strategic priority for Lancashire Cricket, with a particular emphasis on creating a regional centre for Women and Girls cricket... ECB fully supports the proposed project."

5.52 The proposal fully aligns with the ECB's five year plan 'Inspiring Generations' which seeks to encourage more young people to form a lifelong relationship with cricket from an early age. An assessment of how the Proposed Development will directly contribute to the ECB's six stated priorities is set out below:

1. **Grow and nurture from the Core** – the Proposed Development will strengthen LC's ability to attract and harness talent as well as providing it with a new ground in an accessible location in the heart of Lancashire for elite domestic competitions which will further raise the profile and reach of the game within its home County and the wider north-west region.
2. **Inspire through Elite Teams** – the Proposed Development will provide a facility specifically designed to support and facilitate an important synergy between grass roots and elite cricket. The presence and visibility of elite teams will provide vital inspiration to those at junior and academy levels, the positive impact of which cannot be underrated.
3. **Make Cricket Accessible** – the Proposed Development has been designed to appeal to and be accessible to all including women and girls; disabilities (Lancashire's Disabled team will be based at Farington); and BAME communities.
4. **Engage Children and Young People** – the proposed community pitch would provide a valuable resource for use by local schools including through the Chance to Shine programme which forms a key part of the Lancashire Cricket Foundation's (LCF) activities (as detailed within **Appendix 6**). The potential for further affiliation with Myerscough College, who already currently make use of EOT, would further LC's ability to positively engage with and attract young people to the game.
5. **Transform Women's and Girls' Cricket** – the Proposed Development would establish a Women's Centre of Excellence which will significantly raise the profile of Women's cricket (at the very least on a regional, if not a national

basis) and support the continued growth of women's and girls' cricket at all levels.

6. **Support our Communities** – the Proposed Development will provide a valuable community resource as a hub for cricket and all its associated activities, bringing a range of people together from all walks of society.

5.53 In a similar vein, the proposals also align with the objectives of Sport England and their mission statement: *"to tackle deep-rooted inequalities and unlock the advantages of sport and physical activity for everyone"*. The proposed facility will enhance the availability and accessibility of cricket at all levels and abilities, and without prejudice.

5.54 As set out in more detail within the Benefits Statement, prepared by AMION, the Proposed Development would support many of the key strategies and policies of Lancashire LEP, University of Central Lancashire, Myerscough College and the corporate and spatial policies of Lancashire County Council and South Ribble Borough Council, and deliver a number of benefits in this respect.

5.55 The proposals will therefore contribute towards meeting an objectively assessed need for additional cricket pitch provision at the local (South Ribble) level; significantly contribute towards meeting the needs of LC (both in terms of alleviating current capacity issues at EOT but also in terms of enabling further crucial growth and development at junior and academy level and within women's cricket); in addition to contributing strongly to national, regional and sub-regional sports and local government strategies and policies.

2. Lack of Alternative Sites

5.56 The Farington Site is uniquely capable of meeting the identified need for cricket pitch provision in an area of shortfall whilst also meeting the locational and operational requirements of LC (including accessibility by a range of modes of transport), for which there are no more suitable locations, having regard to LC's requirements and the lack of other more suitable, available (and deliverable) sites.

5.57 At the outset, it was clear that LC were not in a position to compete with development land prices thus ruling out potential opportunities within urban areas and those subject to planning policy allocations for development. It also became

readily evident that LC required a development partner in order to forward fund the scheme.

Development Agreement

- 5.58 At the outset, in order to deliver a major cricket facility for Lancashire Cricket, and to fully realise the scale of opportunity, LC needed to work with a development partner and agreed to do so with Lancashire County Council (LCC). LCC offer value to the project in being able to bring a range of benefits to the scheme that would meet LC's critical needs in terms of timing of delivery, certainty and wider economic and social value.
- 5.59 LCC would take the development forward on its own land and are able to provide a delivery model that meets the viability requirements of both parties whilst meeting all necessary protocols, approvals and controls. LCC has a pipeline of major development sites and a track record in delivery through a range of models and mechanisms aligned to a dedicated multidisciplinary team. Working with this resource and with LCC's development partner Eric Wright would enable the proposed scheme to be scoped, planned and delivered within a 2-3 year timeframe meeting LC's requirements.
- 5.60 A partnership with the LCC also provides a number of opportunities to build the optimum range of economic, social value and community benefits. LCC's overarching and pan Lancashire role enables LC to have direct dialogue on a variety of county wide cricket, sport and broader health and wellbeing opportunities. It is also well placed to act as a strategic conduit and link to district and borough councils alongside unitary authorities in the Lancashire sub region to progress broader initiatives and opportunities vital to facilitate a "full and comprehensive" offer.

Identifying Sites

- 5.61 Having established LCC as development partner the starting point for identifying an appropriate site for the proposal was an assessment of LCC's landholdings. A site selection process was initially undertaken to identify all sites comprising in excess of 13ha (this having been established as the minimum site area required to accommodate the proposed pitches and associated infrastructure). This initial process elicited a total of 32 potential sites, the location of which are illustrated on the Plan provided in **Appendix 7**.

Site Assessment Criteria

5.62 Each site was then assessed by LCC against a series of criteria established in discussion with LC, which sought to make the most out of the development opportunity. These are listed below:

- A location within Lancashire where LC do not currently have an existing established base despite their namesake;
- Good accessibility from a range of modes and connectivity to the strategic road network;
- A location which is apposite with LC's membership catchment (as detailed in **Appendix 8**);
- An area where there is a local deficiency in cricket pitch provision;
- Availability within a short-term period; and
- Suitable ground conditions including reasonably level topography; not at risk of flooding; no fundamental planning constraints.

5.63 This process identified land at Woodcock Estate, Farington which scored well against each of the above criteria. The detailed assessment of alternative sites is included in **Appendix 9**. This demonstrates that no other single site scored well in relation to all the criteria and for this reason it is concluded that there are no alternative sites which are suitable, available and deliverable to accommodate the Proposed Development.

3. Social and Community Benefits

5.64 The Proposed Development will deliver significant social and community benefits, including through the bringing together of elite and community cricket in a single development, which will maximise access to and the propensity for advancement through the sport and further raise the profile of the game.

5.65 The Proposed Development will host first-class professional matches for both Men's and Women's cricket, as well as Academy and Age-Group fixtures and will become a Women's Centre of Excellence for the North-West of England. It will also host LC's Disabled team. The full range of benefits would include:

- Continued player development, specifically of Lancashire's age-group and academy teams, in an environment shared with elite cricket which will engender ambitions and encourage and support advancement through the sport.

- The creation of a Women's Centre of Excellence for the North of England which will harness forecast growth in Women's cricket as well as contribute towards inspiring and encouraging further uptake in the sport at all levels and support advancement to elite level.
- Enhanced access to cricket and high-quality facilities through the significant use of the facilities by primary and secondary schools (including for after-school clubs and events such as sports days and inter school competitions), in addition to the ability to host recreational club cricket. This will lead to greater levels of participation in the sport, education and community events.
- The opportunity to grow existing links with the University of Central Lancashire and Myerscough College, who already utilise EOT, further supporting the potential for education-backed advancement within the cricket/sports industry as well as other areas of the curriculum including apprenticeships in the construction and hospitality sectors.
- The opportunity to create special and bespoke sports participation facilities for women, BAME communities and people with disabilities.
- The opportunity for further work with the Lancashire Cricket Foundation (LCF) on programmes that can be specifically run at Farington. The LCF works across the North West to develop and deliver a range of projects, programmes and events designed to engage, excite, inspire and improve individuals through cricket and seeks to growth the appeal of the game at all levels and abilities. The work of the LCF helps to increase engagement with hard-to-reach groups which will contribute towards meeting LCC's priorities in this respect.
- Multiple benefits to individual health and wellbeing associated with increased levels of participation in sport and leisure induced by the facility.
- A valuable community resource available to those with an interest in the sport. This benefit is particularly acute as there is a recognised deficiency in community facility provision in this part of the Borough.

5.66 The Proposed Development will contribute towards meeting the objectively assessed local needs for cricket pitch provision and thereby contribute towards the policy objectives of the existing and emerging Local Plan. The proposals will also deliver on a number of LCC's corporate objectives particularly in relation to supporting community cohesion, inclusivity, health and wellbeing and access to open space and recreation.

4. Economic Benefits

5.67 The Proposed Development will deliver significant economic benefits, which are set out in detail within the Assessment of Benefits, prepared by AMION, but in summary will include the following (at a Lancashire spatial level):

- Job creation at construction stages – 155 gross temporary employment (person years) and 155 net additional temporary employment (person years), generating £10.84m net additional GVA.
- Job creation at operational phase – 28.3 gross FTE jobs and 33.3 net additional FTE jobs, generating a significant £2,135m net additional GVA.
- Local supply chain benefits during the construction phase – an estimated £3.35m of indirect and induced expenditure;
- Local supply chain benefits during the operational phase - £0.2m per annum indirect and induced expenditure;
- An estimated 541 person weeks of construction skills training;
- An estimated 14 apprenticeships during the construction phase;
- An improved image for the County arising from the investment by and presence of a major elite sporting brand.
- Increased levels of health and wellbeing associated with increased levels of participation in sport and leisure induced by the facility – quantified as being worth around £0.81m per annum;
- Increased tourism to South Ribble and Preston and associated economic benefits for the tourism industry and related sectors.

5. Quality of the Scheme and Environmental Benefits

5.68 The Proposed Development is landscape-led and whilst some built-form is proposed this has been minimised and designed in a way which respects the rural, open character of the Site. The proposed pavilion building is considered to be of significant architectural merit, with its form and position taking cues from the landscape such that it is considered a sympathetic addition whilst also meeting the operational needs of LC.

5.69 The building itself has been designed with aspirations of achieving Net Zero Carbon which would exceed local planning policy requirements (CLCS Policy 27). The

proposals will also deliver substantial net gains in biodiversity (as set out within the BNG Report) which again exceed local planning policy requirements and would set an important benchmark for sensitively located sites to maximise opportunities for ecological enhancement.

Proposition

- 5.70 It is our proposition that the Proposed Development accords with the requirements of NPPF paragraphs 149 and 150 and therefore constitutes appropriate development in the Green Belt. Should the decision maker form a different view and conclude that the Proposed Development constitutes inappropriate development, we have put forward a very special circumstances case should the proposals fall to be considered against NPPF paragraph 148.
- 5.71 Under the latter, the choice that the decision maker would therefore be asked to consider is whether they wish to embrace the establishment of a high-quality and very much needed outdoor sports facility within an accessible location and the range of social, economic (both direct and in-direct) and environmental benefits this will bring, or whether the protection of the Green Belt and Area of Separation in this location is more important.
- 5.72 Against the context of no alternative suitable, available and deliverable sites, the proposals represent a unique opportunity to address a wide range of needs and policy objectives and ultimately deliver significant benefits to the public. Such benefits are considered substantial and should weigh in favour of the proposal.

6.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 This Section sets out how the Proposed Development complies with the relevant national and local planning policy identified in Section 4. It draws upon the extensive analysis that has been undertaken as part of this Planning Application and is set out in the Application supporting documents. Reference is made to the findings of technical reports submitted in support of the Planning Application where appropriate to avoid unnecessary repetition.
- 6.2 The Application Site is located in the Green Belt and an Area of Separation and therefore relevant Green Belt policies at national and local level apply. Our assessment of the Proposed Development against Green Belt policy is set out within Section 5.
- 6.3 This section deals with the principle of development, and other technical matters.

Principle of Development

- 6.4 The core theme underpinning national and local planning policy is to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF summarises sustainable development as *'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'* (paragraph 7). As part of this there are intertwined economic, social and environmental objectives which need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways so that, where possible, they each secure net gains.
- 6.5 Proposed development seeks to deliver a new sporting facility which is supported by CLCS Policy 24, particularly in cases where there is an evidence need from an operator which in this case is LC. The requirements of LC are clearly set out in Section 5 and are not repeated here. In addition, there is an objectively assessed need identified by the PPA (2018) which the proposal would also contribute towards. In line with the objectives of Policy 24, the Proposed Development will promote increased physical activity and exercise which will have a direct and positive impact on health and wellbeing.
- 6.6 In this respect, the Proposed Development would meet the following identified needs:

- i) The localised need for additional cricket pitch provision within South Ribble – this is an objectively assessed need which South Ribble (and by association LCC) have a duty to plan positively for (under NPPF paragraph 11b));
 - ii) The specific needs of LC who have a long-standing requirement for a second ground to alleviate capacity issues at EOT and to support the growth and development of the Club across all levels. Without new provision, such an opportunity would be stifled; and
 - iii) The localised need for community facilities.
- 6.7 The proposals will also materially contribute towards meeting the objectives of sporting bodies including Sport England and the ECB in seeking to maximise opportunities for participation in sport, and cricket specifically. It would also contribute towards a range of core policy objectives across LCC and SRBC and therefore has potential to deliver significant direct and in-direct public benefits.
- 6.8 As set out in Section 5, the proposals will bring about significant social benefits (both direct and in-direct) and there would be a clear net gain in terms of this objective of sustainable development.
- 6.9 The proposal would support new jobs on site and contribute significantly to the wider local economy including through the attraction of visitors to the area (supporting additional indirect employment opportunities and associated GVA within the leisure and tourism sector in particular). The Proposed Development will therefore also deliver a net gain in terms of the economic objective.
- 6.10 Finally, the proposal would significantly enhance the biodiversity of the Site to a degree which is far in excess of local policy requirements and also aspire to achieving Net Zero Carbon in seeking to ensure that its presence is fully offset. The Proposed Development is therefore also considered to deliver an overall net gain in terms of the environmental objective of sustainable development.
- 6.11 The proposal is therefore considered to comprise 'sustainable development' for the purposes of the NPPF and the presumption in favour is therefore triggered. There are no policies within the Local Plan which would fundamentally preclude the principle of development on the Application Site. However, there are clearly detailed development management considerations which would need to be satisfactorily met and these are discussed in more detail below.

Loss of Agricultural Land

- 6.12 As set out within the submitted Agricultural Land Assessment, the Site is classified as Grade 3 agricultural land, of which 87% is Subgrade 3b with a small area (11%) Subgrade 3a. Whilst Grade 3a is considered Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land, it is limited in extent and surrounded by non-BMV land in Subgrade 3b, and within two fields that are mixed Subgrades 3a and 3b. As such, the BMV land cannot be managed any differently to the surrounding Subgrade 3b land and, in terms of paragraph 174 of the NPPF, does not offer any economic or other benefits for being BMV land that are not offered by the surrounding and majority non-BMV land.
- 6.13 Having regard to the above, there is no realistic prospect that the land will be utilised for agricultural purposes and the loss of this limited area of BMV land is therefore considered to be acceptable and in accordance with CLCS Policy 31.

Design

- 6.14 Section 12 of the NPPF attaches great importance to the design of the built environment, stating that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development; is indivisible from good planning; and should contribute positively to making places better for people.
- 6.15 This Application proposes to establish a new high-quality sporting facility which has been designed sympathetically to respect the character of the Site and to minimise its impression within the Green Belt and Area of Separation.
- 6.16 With the explicit intention of minimising built form within the Site, a single building (the pavilion) is proposed and significant attention to detail has gone into designing this building to ensure that it takes into account the character and appearance of the local area including though its siting, layout, massing, scale, design, the use of materials and landscaping in accordance with CLCS Policy 17 and SRLP Policy G17.
- 6.17 Further detail is set out within the submitted Design and Access Statement, prepared by BDP but in summary, key aspects of the design include:
- The siting of the building (and practice nets) along the western site boundary which allows the proposed built form to blend into the rhythm of scattered

properties which already form part of views into and across the Site, and thereby minimising overall impact.

- The use of changing levels across the Site to effectively sink the building into the landscape so that the building is generally perceived as single storey to all but close views of the western elevation.
- A triangular form which maximises views across each pitch and provides a high-quality hospitality and function space at the apex.
- The use of natural materials to emulate the character and appearance of the local area, but which also assist in minimising embodied carbon.
- Extensive landscaping which further contributes to the effect of nestling the building into the landscape whilst also providing a natural screen to elements which might be considered 'urbanising' effects (i.e. external plant).
- A sustainable design which meets BREEAM 'Very Good' standard and aspires to Net Zero Carbon.

6.18 As a consequence, it is considered that the proposed building exhibits a strong sense of quality and architectural interest whilst also appearing relatively discreet and subordinate to the adjacent pitches and surrounding landscape.

Landscape Character

6.19 As set out within the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), prepared by Urban Green, the Site is considered to be in a good condition and of good value in terms of its landscape character. The Site is not subject to any specific landscape designations although it is recognised that the Site is within the Green Belt and has Public Rights of Way which run through the Site and along its boundaries.

6.20 The LVIA includes a detailed assessment of landscape effects and concludes that the Proposed Development would, whilst wholly replacing portions of the landscape character at the Site level, sit within the existing retained landscape character elements at the Site level and the landscape character at the regional and district level.

6.21 Whilst some adverse effects will arise from the Proposed Development as it emerges, the development of this land forms a discrete parcel within the landscape. Furthermore, the effects are limited to the Appraisal Site and local level receptors immediately adjacent to the Appraisal Site only. The effects will also reduce over

time as planting matures. The new tree planting and a vegetation strategy are to be considered for long term replacement and reinforcement of existing green infrastructure networks, which will ensure that the longevity and vigour of vegetation is maintained on Site.

- 6.22 The proposals are therefore considered to accord with the requirements of CLCS Policy 21.

Green Infrastructure

- 6.23 In accordance with CLCS Policy 18 and SRBC Policy G8 the Proposed Development will positively contribute to the Green Infrastructure (GI) network (including through substantial landscape enhancements set out in more detail below); encourage and provide improved access to GI; and allow for the long-term management of the area.

Ecology

- 6.24 In accordance with CLCS Policy 22 and SRLP Policy G16 the Application is supported by an Ecological Assessment (EA) which confirms that the Site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory designations.
- 6.25 The existing hedgerows, scattered trees and ditches provide foraging habitat for bat species found in the local area, particularly the common pipistrelle species and the transect surveys confirmed the presence of bats within the Site, particularly within the hedgerows which they use for foraging and commuting. No bat roosts were identified.
- 6.26 As advised within the recommendations of the EA, the removal of hedgerows and scattered trees within the Site are to be compensated for with replacement planting significantly in excess of that which is being removed. A sensitive lighting strategy has also been developed, with input from the Ecologist. Further details of this are set out within the Design and Access Statement.
- 6.27 The existing hedgerows, scattered trees and grassland also provide nesting habitat for breeding birds during the nesting season. It is therefore recommended that site works which would impact any of these habitats takes place outside the peak bird breeding season (March to September).

6.28 In accordance with CLCS Policy 22 and SRLP Policy G16, the proposals have sought to conserve and protect biological assets within the Site, where possible. Where this is unavoidable, the proposals make provision to compensate and significantly enhance biodiversity as demonstrated within the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Report, prepared by Urban Green which includes a detailed BNG calculation⁴ which commits to the following:

- 67.33% net gain of habitat areas; and
- 8.78% net gain of linear hedgerow habitats; and
- 16.33% net gain of linear river habitats.

6.29 The Proposed Development will therefore achieve an overall net gain of 54.6%. A Biodiversity Environmental Management Plan (BEMP) has also been prepared and submitted as part of the planning application which sets out the approach to the long-term management of these habitats for the next 30 years.

6.30 Overall, the proposals will deliver a significant positive benefit in ecological terms.

Trees

6.31 The proposal seeks to deliver a high-quality design set with a generous landscape setting as illustrated within the Design and Access Statement. Overall, this seeks to build on the Site's existing landscape character and commits to delivering an overall enhancement in terms of the quantum of trees and planting across the Site in accordance with SRLP Policy G13.

6.32 The Application is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment which identifies the removal of 20 trees, five hedges, parts of two hedges and one group of which three are Category A, 16 are Category B and nine are Category C, in order to facilitate the Proposed Development. Amongst these, nine trees and two tree groups are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) dated 11 March 2021. It is proposed to compensate for this loss with substantial re-planting at a rate of six trees for every one lost. This is significantly in excess of SRLP's policy, which seeks replacement at a rate of two trees for every one lost but is considered appropriate given the protected nature of certain trees requiring removal.

⁴ Using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 published by Natural England.

- 6.33 In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012, it is prohibited to undertake works to any tree to which a TPO relates under Regulation 13. However, there are exceptions to this listed under Regulation 14, which includes provision "*so far as such work is necessary to implement a planning permission (other than an outline planning permission or, without prejudice to paragraph (iii)(cc), a permission granted by or under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995) granted on an application under Part III of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (control over development), or deemed to have been granted (whether for the purposes of that Part or otherwise)*".
- 6.34 As a Regulation 3 application (as set out at paragraph 1.2 of this Statement), the proposed removal of TPO trees falls to be considered by LCC as the "determining authority" and not SRBC as the "TPO Authority".

Sustainability

- 6.35 In accordance with CLCS Policy 27, the Proposed Development targets BREEAM 'Very Good' and also aspires to Net Zero Operational Carbon. Further details, including a BREEAM Pre-Assessment are including within the Sustainability Report, produced by BDP. Alongside this sits an Energy Statement prepared by Hurstwood which provides a feasibility assessment of renewable and low carbon technologies. Further details on the overarching sustainability credentials of the scheme are also set out within the Design and Access Statement.

Flood Risk

- 6.36 In accordance with the NPPF paragraph 167 and CLCS Policy 29, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Sustainable Drainage Strategy (SDS) have been prepared and submitted as part of the Application.
- 6.37 The FRA confirms that the Site is located within Flood Zone 1 (low risk). Land just north of the Site, adjacent to the A582, is identified as being within Flood Zone 2. Based on the topography of the Site this does not pose a risk. It is also relevant to note that the A582 is subject to a current application (awaiting determination) proposing a package of improvement works. As part of these proposals, a surface water attenuation pond is to be constructed just outside the northern boundary and within the area of Flood Zone 2 noted above.

- 6.38 The surface water flood mapping data does not indicate any significant areas that are potentially susceptible to pluvial flooding. Some isolated flooding is shown in the north-west corner. However, this represents a low point in the existing topography which will be the site of the proposed attenuation basin.
- 6.39 The Environment Agency's surface water flood maps also indicate that the majority of the Site is at low risk from surface water flooding with isolated areas of medium and high risk along the line of the existing ditch network and at low points within the topography as you would expect.
- 6.40 A full levels strategy and cut-fill analysis has been undertaken for the Site to inform the Proposed Development as the creation of the proposed pitches and spectator mounds will require reasonably significant earthworks to be undertaken. Whilst this will affect existing overland flow paths, ultimately the proposed new levels will still direct any exceedance flows in a north westerly direction towards the River Lostock. The risk to the Site from groundwater flooding, despite significant changes in levels in parts of the Site is also considered low and will be managed as part of the proposed drainage system.
- 6.41 The proposed surface water drainage system has been designed to maintain the surface water flows below ground or within surface attenuation features for up to and including the 1 in 100-year return period as a minimum. Some minor flooding occurs within the drainage system during the extreme 100-year + 40% return period however this would be safely stored on the surface through the use of SuDS until it can re-enter the drainage system once the storm has subsided. This is set out in detail in the submitted Sustainable Drainage Statement.
- 6.42 To ensure that the Proposed Development will not increase flood risk elsewhere, surface water drainage discharge rates will be restricted to greenfield runoff (Qbar). This restricted discharge in conjunction with surface water attenuation on site will mitigate against any food risk to other land. By reducing the pre-development peak runoff prior to its discharge to the river network, this will reduce the potential for surface water flooding downstream.
- 6.43 The foul water drainage system will be designed in accordance with the relevant British Standards and Building Regulations and will provide sufficient capacity for

the development. It is also considered that the risk of flooding to the Site from either existing or proposed sewerage infrastructure is low.

- 6.44 The proposed development is classed as less vulnerable usage and it is located in Flood Zone 1 which meets the sequential test. An exception test is not required.
- 6.45 The proposals are therefore considered to accord with national and local planning policy in flood risk and drainage terms.

Highways

- 6.46 The Transport Assessment (TA) submitted in support of the Proposed Development establishes that the Site is spatially well located to encourage people travelling to and from the Site to make journeys by sustainable modes. The Proposed Development therefore presents an opportunity to provide an elite sporting facility in a location that offers a genuine choice of transport modes. Such travel will also be actively promoted by LC on ticketed match days through the use of match-specific Event Day Travel Plans (consistent with LC's existing operations). The Proposed Development is considered to accord with the objectives of CLCS Policy 3 in this respect.

Access

- 6.47 The Site is to be accessed off Stanifield Lane approximately 130m to the south of the A582/A5083 roundabout. A site access drawing is provided in the TA (Appendix E, Drawing Reference FCR-WSP-ZZ-XX-DR-C-0013).
- 6.48 The proposed access is to be a three-arm priority junction⁵ with Stanifield Lane as the major arm, and the new site access road as the minor arm. A ghost island is to be provided for right turning vehicles approaching the Site from the north. The access road is proposed to have two lane exit, one for right turning vehicles and one for left turners.
- 6.49 The access has been designed proposing that a 30mph speed limit would be introduced along Stanifield Lane adjacent to the Site, extending the current 30mph limit south of the Site. A reduction in speed limit to 30mph is being discussed with

⁵ With potential for it to be a staggered 4-way priority junction with access to the adjacent Lancashire Central site.

the Highway Authority and is subject to agreement. With the proposed 30mph speed limit in place, suitable visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m would be provided for vehicles exiting the Site.

- 6.50 An emergency access point off the A582 will provide a secondary point of access for emergency situations only. An indicative drawing showing the suggested location of the emergency access is shown on the Proposed Site Plan (**Appendix 2**). This access is not intended to be formalised but there will be a clearway retained within the Site to allow for emergency access/egress in the event of an incident on Stanfield Lane impacting on the ability to access/egress the Site. This access point has been discussed in detail as part of pre-application discussions with the Highway Authority.
- 6.51 The proposals also propose to divert the two PROWs which currently cross the Site. The PROW to the north is proposed to be realigned so that it follows a new footpath which would connect to Stanifield Lane at a point where it meets the existing footpath to the west. This would not be substantially less convenient than the existing route and would offer a benefit in meeting with an existing footpath as to opposed to requiring those wishing to travel north to do so along the road (as existing).
- 6.52 The PROW which currently crosses the centre of the Site, is proposed to be diverted around the Site boundary in a manor which mirrors the existing route, but due east. On this basis, it would not be substantially less convenient than the existing route. The proposed diversion would also formalise a diversion around Sherdley Cottage which would have a localised benefit for the occupier of this property.
- 6.53 It is not intended to surface the path, given the Site is in Green Belt and the green character of the Site has been highlighted as being important to local residents and stakeholders in pre-application consultation. A fundamental design driver has therefore been to keep built form to the minimum, and to maintain green character as far as possible. The hard surfacing of the entire PROW route would add a not insignificant amount of built form to the scheme, and for this reason the proposals are to maintain the diverted PROW as a green way. This approach has taken into account ground conditions and drainage considerations.

Traffic Generation and Impact

- 6.54 In accordance with the proposed Use Parameters (set out in Section 3), the TA recognises that the use of the facility will vary throughout the year, largely dominated by the cricket season, April to September. The use of the two ovals and will be during the cricket season only, whereas the training nets will be available for use by the squads year-round. The pavilion will also be available for hospitality events, including private hire, all year round. Groundskeeping staff will maintain the site year-round, with additional staff employed on a seasonal basis during the cricket season and on 'ticketed admission' event days.
- 6.55 The trip generation analysis therefore focuses on the activity during the cricket season when trip generation will be at its highest, including under a maximum capacity ticketed event scenario. This demonstrates that peak trip generation will occur outside the AM and PM peak on the network.
- 6.56 Junction capacity modelling has been undertaken at both the proposed site access junction and the A582/Stanifield Lane/Watkin Lane signalised roundabout. Capacity modelling has been undertaken based on 2024 and 2029 future year assessments and has accounted for committed developments in the local area (i.e. those with planning consent, including the adjacent Cuerden Strategic Site), and Expected developments (i.e. those that have not been consented but are anticipated to come forward, such as the A582 dualling). The capacity modelling has considered AM peak, PM peak and Saturday peak period, and the modelling results indicate that the Proposed Development would not compromise the operation and capacity of these two junctions on the local network, in any modelled scenario.
- 6.57 The TA demonstrates that the Proposed Development would not lead to an unacceptable impact on highway safety, nor would the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. The proposals are therefore considered to be acceptable in transport terms.

Parking

- 6.58 The Proposed Development includes provision for 265 permanent car parking spaces across the two car parks. On event days, where demand requires it, an overflow car park with capacity for a further 235 cars is proposed for use (in a field adjacent to the main permanent car park). Therefore, a maximum of 500 spaces are available for parking on site.

- 6.59 Using an assumed car occupancy of between 2.7 and 3 spectators per car, the on-site parking spaces would accommodate approximately 1,080 – 1,200 spectators (assuming 100 on-site spaces would be reserved for staff and players, leaving 400 spaces for spectators), equating to up to 24% of a full capacity 5,000 attendance.
- 6.60 For larger events, an Event Day Travel Plan would, as necessary, include an off-site parking strategy utilising additional nearby locations to increase parking capacity for the event. This is consistent with LC's current approach in utilising various outground facilities. The use of these sites would involve discussion with local landowners. Availability of suitable land for use would vary on an event-by-event basis depending on weekday or weekend match and the availability would need to be discussed with local landowners in advance of the preparation of the specific Event Day Travel Plan. Clear signage for any off-site car parking would be provided.
- 6.61 Using an assumed car occupancy of between 2.7 and 3 spectators per car, 450 off-site parking spaces would accommodate approximately 1,215 – 1,350 spectators, equating to approximately 25% of a full capacity 5,000 attendance. The on and off-site parking would therefore accommodate approximately 50% of the maximum capacity crowd. The remaining 50% of spectators are assumed to travel to the Site via the range of methods (including rail and ride, off-site park and ride, coaches, walking and cycling), some of which would only be required on event days where full capacity of 5,000 spectators is expected.
- 6.62 Parking on-street nearby the facility would be discouraged, with formal parking provision clearly signposted and advertised. Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) could also be used to prevent on-street parking on residential streets.

Coach Parking

- 6.63 Space for 2No. team coach parking is proposed to the west of the pavilion.

Cycle Parking

- 6.64 Cycle parking will be provided with space for up to 50 cycles, located between the cricket ovals and the main car park. With cricket being a game played during the summer months between April and September, there are opportunities to maximise cycling to the Site, particularly for regular use on non-event days.

Amenity Considerations

- 6.65 In accordance with CLCS Policy 17 and SRLP Policy G17 the Proposed Development has sought to minimise the potential for negative effects on the amenity of neighbouring residential occupiers in proximity to the Site.

Noise

- 6.66 A Noise Assessment has been undertaken and is submitted as part of the Planning Application. This provides an indication of the likely noise impact associated with the use of the proposed facility under a number of scenarios to address normal day to day use of the facility as well as the proposed higher capacity ticketed events.
- 6.67 For robustness and in recognition that activities may take place individually or together, for differing periods of time throughout the course of a typical day, each scenario has been assessed to a 1-hour period with all proposed activities taking place simultaneously. This presents a 'worst case' assessment of each scenario with actual impact expected to be lower than predicted.
- 6.68 Based on the results of the assessment, it is recommended that a 5m acoustic fence is erected around the northern, western and southern boundaries of the cricket nets, which has been incorporated into the design. With this mitigation in place the noise impact from the use of the nets is predicted to be 52dBA for the 'worst case' 1 hour assessment period at the worst affected residential façade. As the daytime LAeq is typically 52dBA, this is in line with the existing noise climate during a typical daytime period and will not therefore result in any adverse impact on residential amenity.
- 6.69 It is also expected that there will be noise impacts associated with large capacity match days at the observed adverse effect threshold which, in line with the Noise Exposure Hierarchy, should be limited as far as is practicable. It is proposed to limit impacts by controlling the number of events and through event management procedures both of which can be controlled by condition with reference to Use Parameters set out in Section 3 and to the Event Day Management Framework included within **Appendix 10**. Such a condition could be worded as follows:

The development hereby approved must adhere to the strict requirements set out within the approved Event Management Framework for ticketed match day events.

- 6.70 Plant noise target limits have been set in accordance with the relevant applicable guidance to inform the M&E design and specification process. This will ensure that any noise associated with external plant is within a reasonable range so as not to unduly impact on neighbouring residents.
- 6.71 With the measures proposed, it is considered that the noise impacts associated with the development would be minimised in terms of occurrence and severity.

Overlooking

- 6.72 Whilst there are no fixed barriers proposed to prevent visitors to the Site from climbing onto raised bunds, the use of landscaping and wayfinding will seek to steer visitors along the internal path network. On match days, the additional presence of stewards will assist in ensuring that visitors adhere to defined routes and do not ascend the bunds. The prospect for overlooking into neighbouring properties is therefore considered to be low.

Lighting

- 6.73 Key principles for lighting are set out within Section 5.11 of the DAS which seek to guide the detailed lighting design for the Proposed Development and ensure that the lighting is sensitive to protected habitats and neighbouring residents. For example, there will be no floodlights (all matches will be played in daylight hours) and lighting will be limited to lighting the pavilion, the practice nets and low-level bollards along the vehicular and pedestrian access routes only.
- 6.74 Furthermore, there is a commitment to ensuring that all lighting is directed downward with a tightly controlled distribution to limit unwanted backwards spill and to prevent light spill on to the boundaries of the Site. A requirement for the detailed lighting design to adhere to the principles established within the DAS may be secured by way of condition.

Air Quality

- 6.75 An Air Quality Assessment (AQA) has been submitted in support of the Proposed Development. This explains that the Site is not located within an AQMA. However, SRBC AQMA No.3 lies 0.8km to the north, and traffic from the Proposed Development has potential to pass through this AQMA. In accordance with CLCS Policy 30, an AQA has therefore been undertaken to assess the potential impacts of the Proposed Development, including impacts during the construction phase and potential operational impacts linked to traffic generation.
- 6.76 Whilst the construction phase is expected to give rise to emissions which could cause dust soiling effects on adjacent uses, these effects can be reduced to a negligible extent through the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures (detailed in Appendix K of the AQA) which can be secured by Condition.
- 6.77 The operation of the Proposed Development is not expected to significantly impact on local air quality. Furthermore, there is in any event a commitment to implementing a range of measures including a Travel Plan; the provision of secure cycle storage spaces; and the use of Air Source Heat Pumps for heating and hot water generation; which will positively contribute towards minimising the potential for negative impacts on air quality.
- 6.78 The Proposed Development is therefore expected to comply with all relevant local and national air quality policy.

Assessment Summary

- 6.79 Having regard to the above, the Proposed Development is considered to accord with the Development Plan and the NPPF. The Proposed Development will also deliver substantial benefits (as set out in detail in Section 5) including, but not limited to, the following:
- A wide range of direct benefits for LC, its players and members linked to the quality of facility proposed and the enhanced capacity it will generate. This will directly support continued player development, specifically of Lancashire's age-group and academy teams, in an environment shared with elite cricket which will engender ambitions and encourage and support advancement through the sport.

- The creation of a Women's Centre of Excellence for the North of England which will harness forecast growth in Women's cricket as well as contribute towards inspiring and encouraging further uptake in the sport at all levels and support advancement to elite level.
- Enhanced access to cricket and high-quality facilities, including for schools and community use, which would lead to greater levels of participation in the sport, education and community events.
- Multiple benefits to individual health and wellbeing associated with increased levels of participation in sport and leisure induced by the facility.
- A valuable community resource in an area of deficiency.
- Job creation at both the construction and operational stages and associated net additional GVA both short and long-term.
- An improved image for the County arising from the investment by and presence of a major elite sporting brand and increased tourism to South Ribble and Preston with associated economic benefits for the tourism industry and related sectors.
- Substantial planting of trees and enhancements to local biodiversity within the Site, with net gains across all habitat areas and a c.55% net gain overall.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Barton Willmore, now Stantec on behalf of Lancashire County Council, to assess the planning matters arising from a Full Application at Land at Woodcock Estate, Farington.
- 7.2 The Application proposes the creation of a new, purpose-built cricket facility to be operated by Lancashire Cricket who have identified a critical need for a second permanent ground to complement the facilities at Emirates Old Trafford (EOT), which no longer has the capacity to satisfactorily accommodate the growing demands for playing and training across all levels of the game.
- 7.3 The Proposed Development comprises two full-size cricket ovals and associated pavilion building and spectator seating, partially covered cricket nets, access, parking, landscaping and associated works (including temporary event overlay facilities on ticketed match days).
- 7.4 The Site is located within the Green Belt and an Area of Separation. However, as set out within this Statement, the proposals are considered to constitute appropriate development in the Green Belt (and thereby also an Area of Separation). Notwithstanding this conclusion, the scheme would generate substantial benefits which would constitute the very special circumstances necessary to justify the grant of permission in the event that (contrary to the position set out above) the scheme was held to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There are also no development management considerations which cannot be acceptably mitigated against. There are therefore no reasons to preclude the development from coming forward and planning permission should therefore be forthcoming.